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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-04 SP-02 INR-07 L-03 /042 W
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R 240650Z MAY 76
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

S E C R E T JIDDA 3687

DHAHRAN EYES ONLY FOR CHUSMTM GEN AHMANN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, SA, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE SULTAN

1. AT ELEVEN A.M. ON MAY 22 I MET WITH PRINCE SULTAN. AFTER BRIEF AMENITIES, I SAID I HAD ASKED HIM TO RECEIVE ME BECAUSE WE FELT NEED TO CONSULT WITH HIM ABOUT OUR MOU NEGOTIATIONS ON THE STATUS OF THE U.S. MILITARY TRAINING MISSION PERSONNEL. I REMARKED THAT OF THE FOUR U.S. MILITARY GROUPS HERE ONLY THE STATUS OF THE PERSONNEL OF THE MTM REMAINS UNCERTAIN, AND FOR PURPOSES OF MORALE AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL QUALITY IT SEEMS DESIRABLE TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING. I WAS AWARE THAT WE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING THIS SUBJECT FOR ABOUT A YEAR WITHOUT ACHIEVING A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY RESULT. I HAD ALSO COME TO HIM ON SUBJECT BECAUSE I AM RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES SOON ON CONSULTATION AND, IN ADDITION TO MY DESIRE TO DISCUSS MATTER WITH MY COLLEAGUES, IT IS POSSIBLE I MAY BE CALLED BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS SAUDI/US RELATIONS. I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE HIS THOUGHTS ON SUBJECT.

2. SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, I WOULD ADMIT NATURAL CURIOSITY AS TO WHY USMTM PERSONNEL DO NOT ENJOY THE SAME LEGAL STATUS AS OTHER U.S. MILITARY UNITS IN SAUDI ARABIA. I SAID HIS COMMENT WOULD ENABLE ME TO COPE WITH QUESTIONS I MIGHT BE ASKED IN THE UNITED STATES. I WOULD PARTICULARLY LIKE TO SAY THERE THAT THE MATTER HAD BEEN ARRANGED ALONG MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY LINES.
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3. PRINCE SULTAN WADED INTO THE SUBJECT WITH A VEHEMENCE THAT WAS AS INTERESTING AS IT WAS UNEXPECTED. HE FIRST DECLARED THAT IN THIS REGION IRAN AND ISRAEL ALONE ARE CONSIDERED STRONG MILITARILY. SAUDI
ARABIA WANTS TO BE AT THE SAME LEVEL, BUT
DOESN'T SEEM TO BE GETTING THERE. SAUDI ARABIA NOW HAS MANY FINE EDUCATED YOUNG OFFICERS WHO ARE UNHAPPY AT THE LACK OF PROGRESS. HE REPEATED THESE THEMES SEVERAL TIMES. HE FEELS A STRONG NEED TO REORGANIZE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE MTM, HE DECLARED. AS MATTERS STAND, NOBODY KNOWS WHAT IS EXPECTED TO BE ACCOMPLISHED AND IN WHAT PERIOD OF TIME. IF HE ASKS FOR MEN FOR DET 22 OR IF COE TAKES ON A JOB, THEY BRING PEOPLE, THEY FINISH THE JOB, AND THEY GO AWAY. WHY CAN'T THE MTM DO THE SAME, HE ASKED IN RISING TONES. WHY CAN'T THERE BE PROGRESS TOWARD MAKING SAUDI ARABIAN ARMY STRONG? WHY SHOULD SAUDIS, HE DEMANDED, TAKE INSTRUCTIONS FROM PEOPLE WHO DIRECT THEM FROM ARMCHAIRS INSTEAD OF WORKING ALONGSIDE THEM. HE WAS DESCRIBING HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH WHAT SEEMED TO HIM TO BE LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE MTM EFFORT, AND THE INFERENCE TO BE DRAWN, IT SEEMED TO ME, WAS THAT THIS EXPLAINED WHY SAG HAS BEEN UNRESPONSIVE TO OUR EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE A MORE SATISFACTORY STATUS FOR MTM PERSONNEL.

4. WHEN HE PAUSED, I SAID I WOULD BRING HIS COMMENTS ABOUT REVIEWING THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MTM TO THE ATTENTION OF THOSE INVOLVED. I THANKED HIM FOR HIS FRANKNESS. I THEN SAID I WISHED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HIS THOUGHTS ON THE FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MTM ON THE ONE HAND, WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY RECEIVE SERIOUS ATTENTION, AND, ON THE OTHER, THE LEGAL STATUS OF MTM PERSONNEL AS COMPARED TO THAT OF OTHER U.S. MILITARY ELEMENTS.

5. THIS EVOKED MORE COMMENT FROM SULTAN ABOUT THE NEED HE FEELS TO REORGANIZE METHODS AND FUNCTIONS AND THEN PUT ALL OF OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL ON SAME LEGAL BASIS. I SAID I ENTIRELY SYMPATHIZE WITH HIS DESIRE TO TELL US WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED. SAUDIS PAY THE BILLS AND AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED SHOULD GET WHAT THEY WANT OR WHAT THEY AGREE IS NEEDED. BUT HIS QUESTION ON ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION WAS NOT THE SAME AS THE MATTER OF LEGAL STATUS. I SAID I WOULD PUT HIS THOUGHT BEFORE
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THE PROPER PEOPLE AND I WOULD THEN COME BACK TO HIM.

6. FINALLY, HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT I WAS DRIVING AT AND HE WOULD GIVE ME AN ANSWER ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BEFORE MY DEPARTURE. HE WOULD ORDER COMMITTEE WHICH OVERSEES THESE NEGOTIATIONS TO MEET IMMEDIATELY WITH VIEW TO CLARIFYING ISSUES.

7. COMMENT: WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM OF SOME DIMENSION IN

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THIS ONE. I HAD A GUT FEELING THAT PROGRESS MIGHT BE INSUFFICIENT
TO PLEASE SOME SAUDI ELEMENTS, AND I DISCUSSED THAT WITH
BROWNMAN DURING HIS VISIT TO JIDDA. I HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY SENSED
THAT SAUDI UNHAPPINESS ABOUT "PROGRESS" WAS CONNECTED WITH THEIR
RELUCTANCE TO CONCLUDE LEGAL STATUS AGREEMECW WITH US FOR MTM.
PERHAPS THERE IS NO CONNECTION. SULTAN IS QUITE CAPABLE OF USING
THIS ALLEGED LACK OF PROGRESS, REAL OR IMAGINED, TO COVER SAUDI
PROGRASTINATION ON THE STATUS OF PERSONNEL ISSUE, WHICH HE
OBVIOUSLY DID NOT WISH TO DISCUSS IN DETAIL. SULTAN'S REMARKS
ALSO MAY HAVE BEEN BY WAY OF A NEGOTIATOR'S RESPONSE TO THE
PRESSURE WE ARE PUTTING ON HIM TO ACCORD USMTM GREATER
PRIVILEGES AND GREATER OPERATING FLEXIBILITY (BY SALES CASES AAA
AND AAB). IN HIS COMPLAINTS, SULTAN DID NOT TAKE CERTAIN
FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT, PREFERRING INSTEAD TO PUT ONUS ON MTM;
BUT, REGARDLESS OF BALANCE OR LACK OF IT IN HIS EXPRESSIONS, IT
LOOKS AS THOUGH A FURTHER EXCHANGE WITH HIM WILL
BE NECESSARY. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE DEPT/
DOD REACTION. BG AHMANN IS OF COURSE RECEIVING
COPY OF THIS CABLE.
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